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# China’s imports of French wine jumped 66.17% in September

Traders said lower Bordeaux release prices and restocking by importers fueled the increase, not a broad rebound in Chinese consumption

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China’s imports of French wine rose sharply in September, but traders in the market say the increase appears to reflect restocking and lower prices for some Bordeaux releases more than a broad return of Chinese consumer demand.

Customs data compiled by Vino Joy News show China imported 4.44 million liters of French wine in September, worth $73.69 million. The volume was up 96.61% from August and 66.17% from a year earlier. The value climbed even faster, rising 129.70% from August and 88.60% year over year.

The average declared import value reached $16.59 a liter, up 16.83% from August. Because the value increased more quickly than the volume, the September figures suggest that the mix of wines entering China shifted toward more expensive products as well as larger shipments. The import value reflects the price at the border, not what consumers paid in stores or restaurants.

The jump was enough to put France ahead of Australia as China’s largest source of imported wine by value for the month. It also contrasted with the broader direction of the market in recent years. Chinese customs data show French wine imports generally declined in both volume and value from 2022 through 2025.

Importers interviewed by Vino Joy News linked the September rise to timing in the trade calendar. Wu Xianghua, chief executive of fine wine supply chain company Fine West, said French merchants returned from their August holiday period just as Chinese importers were preparing for the year-end selling season. He said that combination created a wave of orders, and that new wine releases in September added to the momentum.

Lower release prices for the 2024 Bordeaux vintage also helped draw buyers back, especially after weak demand for fine wine and resistance to the pricing of earlier vintages. According to Decanter and wine market reports cited by Vino Joy News, Château Lafite Rothschild cut its release price by about 29% from the 2023 vintage. Château Mouton Rothschild and Château Margaux reduced prices by roughly 25%, and Château Palmer cut its price by about 41%.

Wu said the timing of shipments mattered as much as the lower prices. He said the 2024 Carruades de Lafite and Petit Mouton had begun shipping by September, and that importers wanted to move quickly to catch the Mid-Autumn Festival market while the wines were still competitively priced.

Li Yajun, chief executive of Shanghai-based Merveille Business, gave a similar explanation. He told Vino Joy News that the 2024 vintage was attracting buyers because it was the lowest-priced in nearly six years and offered strong value. Li said small quantities of 2024 Carruades de Lafite arrived in China in September, followed by a larger wave in October.

Another factor was low inventory in some well-known labels. During the market downturn, many importers had kept stock lean to limit risk. As certain wines became harder to find, merchants moved to refill shelves before holiday demand. Dai Pengxuan, general manager of Hangzhou Zhuoyuan International Trade Co., said shortages of some recognized wines encouraged more buying from France ahead of the Mid-Autumn Festival.

Dai said some distributors had concentrated purchases around Lunar New Year on Carruades de Lafite, and by the Mid-Autumn Festival stocks of some products had tightened. That led merchants to step in and source more wine from France, including other well-known estates. He described the September buying as part of an inventory cycle rather than clear evidence of a stronger market.

That distinction may be the most important part of the September data. Higher imports do not necessarily mean that more bottles are being consumed. They can also mean importers decided that stocks had fallen too low and needed to be rebuilt. For wineries, importers and other beverage companies, that difference matters because it can affect how they judge the health of the Chinese market and how aggressively they plan future shipments.

Dai said overall consumption remained weak during the Mid-Autumn Festival, even though some business occasions still require a recognized château wine. Li also suggested the market is becoming more divided, with soft demand in the mass market and steadier buying interest in a narrow group of prestigious producers.

According to Li, Chinese buyers are still looking for familiar Bordeaux names such as Lafite, Mouton and Beychevelle, along with a small group of premium Burgundy producers. He said the pattern is even more pronounced in Burgundy, where prices are higher and production is limited. In that segment, a relatively small increase in volume can push up total import value and average prices because the wines are expensive and often scarce.

Dai took a more cautious view of what September's figures show. He said stocks of some wines are low, but the market still holds 2019, 2020 and 2021 vintages. In his view, merchants have favored the cheaper 2023 and 2024 releases instead of those higher-cost bottles, creating shortages in specific vintages rather than across the fine wine market as a whole. He also said consumers remain price-sensitive.

The September surge, then, appears to have been driven by a convergence of factors: French suppliers returning after the August lull, Chinese importers preparing for the year-end sales period, more attractive pricing from top Bordeaux estates, and the need to replenish tight inventories in a handful of sought-after wines. Whether that will turn into stronger retail and restaurant sales in China is still uncertain, and traders say the coming months will show whether September was the start of a broader recovery or a short-lived restocking wave.